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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 USUN NEW YORK 000156

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SUBJECT: DARFUR: USG AND UN GET READY TO TEST BASHIR

REF: USUN NEW YORK 00134

Classified By: Ambassador Alex Wolff for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. A/S Silverberg expressed on February 20 to UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Guehenno U.S. support for UN candidates for leadership positions in the Darfur hybrid operation. The A/S also pushed for deployment of advance elements of the Heavy Support Package (HSP) in order to test the political will of Sudan President Bashir. Guehenno remains pessimistic on the likelihood of success of this test but, on a positive note, reported that Secretary-General (SYG) Ban and African Union Commission

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Chair Konare have resolved to push Bashir to agree on HSP details, revealing that the SYG was to follow up with Bashir on February 21 for his response to the joint UN-AU letter of January 24. Guehenno deputy Annabi warned that allowing Bashir to "nickel and dime" the UN and the international community would be "the end of peacekeeping as we know it" and would have disastrous consequences for fledgling operations such as that in Chad/Central African Republic. Guehenno reiterated that Konare still needed convincing on the issue of command and control for the hybrid force, as evidenced by his continued declining of SYG invitations to come to New York to discuss the hybrid. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) IO A/S Silverberg met on February 20 in New York with UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Under-Secretary-General Guehenno. Also participating in the meeting for the U.S. were AF/SPG Director Lauren Landis, USUN MSC LTC Patrick Murray, and Poloff; other UN participants included DPKO A/SYG Hedi Annabi, DPKO Africa Division Director Dmitry Titov, DPKO Africa Division Senior Political Affairs Officer Michael Gaouette, and DPKO Darfur Planning Team Officer Lara Sitea.

DPKO SEES GNU TACTICS AS POLITICALLY FORTHCOMING BUT OBSTRUCTIONIST ON PEACEKEEPING

13. (C) Guehenno updated A/S Silverberg on the status of Light Support Package (LSP) deployment, noting there was verbal but not written agreement with the wali of North Darfur over land rights in El Fasher. Guehenno reported that the wali would be traveling from Khartoum to El Fasher after "sleeping on the idea" and DPKO would seek a memorandum of understanding within the next 36 hours. If the wali reneged, however, Guehenno warned that the UN would be forced to consider next steps. DPKO did not expect the UN's own sole-source contract for enablers to be in place in any event by the end of March.

¶4. (C) Guehenno made clear that DPKO believes Bashir has a hand in the North Darfur wali's vacillation as a means of slowing the implementation the three-phase approach to Darfur peacekeeping. Guehenno reported that UN Special Envoy Eliasson had been subject to similar stalling when in the course of his meetings with Bashir, the issue of an answer to the January 24 letter from SYG Ban and AU Commission Chair Konare on the HSP was discussed. Bashir's response to the letter was expected by February 19 but nothing had yet been received; the SYG was to follow up with Bashir on February 21 but was expecting "substantial amendments" to the HSP proposal, namely reduction of military components and insistence on immediate UN funding for the package.

¶5. (C) A/S Silverberg pushed Guehenno on how the UN would react to such a "yes but" reply from Bashir and reminded him that Bashir does not have approval authority over the components of the three-phase plan. Silverberg reiterated the possibility of deploying a Scandinavian (or other) engineering unit with Rwandans as force protection in order to test Bashir's political will. Guehenno said he is "of two minds" on the notion of a test: he is concerned that deploying units, even with force protection, with no assurance that additional robust capacities would back them up would leave the deployed units at risk. He added that many of the more prolific troop-contributing countries (TCCs) actually had a tendency to flee at the first sign of a struggle in such a situation. Still, Guehenno reported that the SYG and Konare resolved to remain steadfast with Bashir on getting to a "yes" on HSP details and would press for rapid deployment of HSP elements as they became available.

¶6. (C) A/SYG Annabi made clear that in negotiations with the Government of National Unity (GNU), it served no one's purpose to allow Bashir to dictate provisions of Darfur

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peacekeeping - essentially to "nickel and dime" the UN and the international community. To do so, Annabi contended, would mark "the end of peacekeeping as we have all understood it so far," and would have disastrous consequences for fledgling peacekeeping operations, such as that in Chad/Central African Republic (CAR).

¶7. (C) Raising and rejecting the possibility of a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution to authorize deployment of attack helicopters and formed police units (FPUs) to assist AMIS, Titov assured that a letter from the UNSC President to the SYG would suffice and recommended that it be timed to coincide with the release of the monthly Darfur report and costing annex (expected o/a March 1). Guehenno added that AU Peace and Security Council approval of the updated concept of operations would also be advisable. (NOTE. In a separate conversation with Poloff, a representative of the Russian Mission said that the Sudanese Mission on February 21 had indicated it had "no problems" with the three-phased deployment concept or with force numbers for the hybrid operation, although the Sudanese reiterated that candidates for FC must be African and again raised the issue of attack helicopters. The Sudanese rep reportedly voiced no objection to FPUs. END NOTE.)

AGREEMENT ON CANDIDATES FOR HYBRID LEADERSHIP

¶8. (C) Citing the ongoing problems DPKO was experiencing with AMIS Force Commander (FC) General Aprezi and his refusal to implement agreed plans to strengthen command and control and to transition from eight sectors to three, A/S Silverberg and Guehenno concurred that strong leadership on the ground was critical for the success of the hybrid operation. A/S Silverberg conveyed U.S. support for the candidates raised by the UN for FC and deputy special representative of the SYG for the Darfur hybrid operation, per ref A. The A/S offered additional names as candidates for the special representative position - LTG (ret.,Ghana) Seth Obeng, LTG (ret.,Senegal)

Khalil Fall and Dr. Margaret Vogt (Nigerian) - as well as Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, ECOWAS executive secretary (Lauren Landiss suggestion); and Haile Menkerios, MONUC D/SRSG. Guehenno and Annabi balked at Menkerios, who they thought, given his Eritrean nationality, would be viewed as a "hostile actor" and a "provocation" imposed by Eritrean President Isaias. Guehenno remarked that DPKO had not considered Ibrahim Gambari to be interested in the SRSG job and therefore he had not been approached. On the possibility of outgoing AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Said Djinnit as an SRSG candidate, Guehenno said he would be considered a "red flag" by the Sudanese for what they perceive to be his UN sympathies.

KONARE STILL DRAGGING FEET ON HYBRID DISCUSSIONS

¶9. (C) Guehenno noted that the issues of hybrid leadership and force composition were the toughest pills for Konare to swallow, which might explain his refusal of the SYG's invitation for him to come to New York before the end of February to discuss these and other outstanding hybrid topics. Guehenno speculated that part of Konare's hardline might stem from the fact that the AU has not asked him to extend in his current position once his tenure expires in June. A/S Silverberg argued that a visit by Konare was crucial, and Guehenno assured that the SYG would continue to press him to come to New York rather than to send Djinnit in his place. Guehenno also reported that an AU response to two formal UN proposals for a coordination meeting to discuss the hybrid force was still outstanding. Guehenno remarked that the matter was "in Konare's hands," and that his indecision might be due to internal AU wrangling over a common position.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) The likelihood of getting an unequivocal "yes" from Bashir even to the HSP, let alone to the hybrid force, is remote at best. Nevertheless, the USG should concentrate on finalizing outstanding contracts with the UN (i.e., our PA&E agreement) so that camps for the additional two Rwandan battalions can be operational as soon as possible and so that credible force protection for whatever enabling units we can frontload will be in place. This action will go far in assuaging DPKO concerns of deploying a battalion into a hostile area without adequate support. At the same time we

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should work with able partners, like Norway and Sweden, to ready their engineering and possibly medical units for deployment on the heels of the two battalions. That way, we will have deployed the requested and requisite force protection elements while concurrently establishing a viable test of Bashir's bona fides. END COMMENT.

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